

Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

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S E C R E T CAIRO 3167

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EO 11652: GDS

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SUBJECT: EGYPTIAN MILITARY SITUATION

1. TO ALL INDICATIONS, BATTLE WHICH OCCURRED THROUGHOUT OCTOBER 17 AND INTO TODAY IN CENTRAL SECTOR OF CANAL'S EAST BANK IS OF MAJOR PROPORTIONS AND OF CONSIDERABLE COST TO BOTH SIDES. IT MAY ALSO BE BEGINNING OF TRUE TEST OF LAND POWER IN SINAI.

2. CAIRO PRESS REPORTS OF VIOLENT CLASHES BETWEEN ISRAELI AND EGYPTIAN ARMOR ARE REINFORCED BY REPORT FROM USINT SOURCE THAT DURING COURSE OF OCTOBER 17 EGYPTIAN ARMY SUFFERED LOSS OF 86 TANKS (WE NOTE IDF TOTALS EGYPTIAN LOSSES ON OCTOBER 17 AS 90-100 TANKS). SOURCE HAS INFORMED US THAT EGYPTIANS SUFFERED 630 MILITARY KILLED AND 780 WOUNDED AND, ALTHOUGH SOURCE DID NOT SAY WHETHER THESE WERE TOTAL EGYPTIAN MILITARY CASUALTIES OR REPRESENTED ONLY THOSE FROM FRONT, CERTAINLY LARGEST LOSS WAS REGISTERED IN ISMAILIA SECTOR.

3. SOURCE HAS ALSO STATED THAT IN CENTRAL SECTOR, EGYPTIAN ARMY SUFFERED A LOSS OF SOME KILOMETERS. IN THIS REGARD, EGYPTIAN MILITARY SPOKESMAN WAS REPORTED THIS MORNING BY AKHBAR AS HAVING STATED THAT EGYPTIAN FORCES HAD PENETRATED

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TO DISTANCE OF 16 KILOMETERS INSIDE SINAI. REFERRING TO SOURCE'S EARLIER INFORMATION THAT EGYPTIANS OCCUPIED POSITIONS 20 KM DEEP OPPOSITE ISMAILIYYA THIS SUGGESTS A MINIMUM LOSS OF FOUR KILOMETERS IN THIS SECTOR AS OF YESTERDAY EVENING.

4. THERE ARE OTHER INDICATIONS THAT THINGS DID NOT GO WELL FOR EGYPTIANS ON OCTOBER 17. THROUGHOUT THE DAY ONLY ONE COMMUNIQUE WAS ISSUED, AND THAT LATE IN EVENING. TODAY, OCTOBER 18, THERE HAVE REPORTEDLY BEEN NO OTHER MILITARY ANNOUNCEMENTS. FINALLY, WE HAVE BEEN TOLD BY NBC TV CORRESPONDENT, WHO WAS SCHEDULED TO GO TO SUEZ FRONT TODAY, THAT GOE INFORMATION DEPARTMENT LAST NIGHT TOLD HIM ALL REQUESTS FOR VISITS TO FRONT WERE BEING POSTPONED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

5. PICTURE WE ARE GETTING IS THAT EGYPTIANS AND ISRAELI FORCES HAVE BEEN LOCKED IN MAJOR ARMORED BATTLE SINCE YESTERDAY MORNING, AND THAT OFFENSIVE HAS BEGUN TO MOVE INTO ISRAELI HANDS EVEN IF ONLY TEMPORARILY. IT IS TOO EARLY TO TELL NOW, BUT WE MAY BE SEEING THE BEGINNING OF THE TRUE TEST OF POWER BETWEEN EGYPTIAN AND ISRAELI LAND FORCES. IN VIEW OF EVENTS SINCE OCTOBER 6, IT IS QUESTIONABLE WHETHER ISRAELI AIRCRAFT CAN PLAY MORE THAN A MINIMAL ROLE IN THIS EVENT.

6. SOURCE ALSO REPORTS THAT ISRAELIS LOST 16 AIRCRAFT, 12 OF THEM IN SUEZ CANAL/FRONT AREA, ON OCTOBER 17.
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